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THE REASONS FOR THE COLLAPSE OF THE SUMMIT CONFERENCE

by

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As time passes, the real factors responsible for the Summit failure begin to emerge more clearly. The more important causes of the break-up are to be sought among the foreign and domestic policy events of the Soviet Union.

First of all, the influence of Premier Khrushchev, the chief proponent of the peaceful-coexistence policy, was weakened by the joint plenary session of the All-Union Party Central Committee and the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, at which numerous personnel changes were effected. The session saw the emergence of a third element, the managerial group, in the Secretariat of the Central Committee.

The appearance of this new element in the Secretariat, represented by Frol R. Kozlov, is seen as a compromise in the Central Committee between the Stalinist group and the adherents of Khrushchev.

Secondly, the ideological rift between the Soviet Union and China played some role in determining the new Soviet approach to the Summit.

A third factor has been suggested recently in an article which appeared in the Neue Zuericher Zeitung. The article shows how the barrier, created in the minds of the Soviet people by Soviet propaganda, was broken down during the peaceful-coexistence period. The break-down exhausted the psychological charge built up by Soviet propaganda against the capitalist countries. In order to avoid a repetition of events in Hungary and Poland, the Soviet leaders felt compelled to re-erect the barrier.

* For biographical information on Nikolai Galay see Analysis Service No. 31, 1959/60

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Sufficient time has passed since the collapse of the Summit Conference in Paris to bring to light the real factors which caused Khrushchev to wreck the conference. Its collapse was brought about by Khrushchev's ultimatum, to which the United States could not possibly submit, its whole-hearted desire for coexistence notwithstanding. The breakdown of the conference was accompanied by personal insults at President Eisenhower, as though to underline the impossibility of any serious rapprochement during the remainder of his term. In order to understand what caused Khrushchev's volte-face, it is necessary to appraise the events in foreign and domestic policy, both in the West and in the East, that preceded it.

In the West, Khrushchev failed to disunite the allies in the period following Camp David, despite definite signs of discord. Nevertheless, their front had been weakened. It was extremely weak even before, because Western policy was of a purely defensive nature. The forthcoming elections in the United States had not as yet cast their shadow on future foreign policy. However, the Western attitude toward coexistence had not changed in any way.

As to the U.S. air surveillance of Soviet territory, Khrushchev admitted that the Soviet government had known about American overflights for a considerable time. The United States had established some measure of aerial inspection over the Soviet Union--to be sure only a partial one, but one which the Soviet government had been powerless to counter effectively. The U-2 flights constituted no obstacle to a policy of coexistence, however. Khrushchev could have put an end to them by thumping his fist on the table at the conference or by making representations after the incident, since the Americans were ready to make concessions for the sake of coexistence. Thus the air incident was used only as a pretext by the Soviets.

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The most significant event within the USSR preceding the conference was the joint plenary session of the All-Union Party Central Committee and the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, held on May 4. In contrast to announcements before previous plenary sessions, the subjects under discussion at the May 4 meeting were not announced even after its conclusion. Only personnel changes at the top of the Soviet power pyramid were disclosed. These changes are significant, however; they indicate a complete overhaul of the Party Secretariat. For some time it has been possible to observe a shift of the power center in the post-Stalin period from the Presidium to the Secretariat. Since the removal of the Stalinists, the latter had been filled almost entirely with Khrushchev supporters. Of the ten members of the Secretariat, precisely those were removed who supported Khrushchev. Leonid I. Brezhnev was given an additional appointment as chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet-- a representative post rather than a position of power. Yekaterina A. Furtseva and Nikolai G. Ignatov were removed from the Secretariat and so was Aleksei I. Kirichenko, who was often referred to as Khrushchev's "crown prince" but who also lost his seat in the Presidium. Averki B. Aristov, who might be regarded as a Khrushchev man, was also removed. Another absentee is the theoretician Pyotr N. Pospelov, but he did not stand close to Khrushchev. Indeed, it might be said that Pospelov and Mikhail A. Suslov, who retains his seat in the Secretariat, belonged to another group. Unlike the revisionist Khrushchev "club," they were more orthodox Communists. They stood closer to the Molotov group than to that of Khrushchev. Of this group there now remain in the Secretariat only Suslov and Otto V. Kuusinen, who is of much the same persuasion but only a secondary figure. Finally there is Nuritdin A. Mukhittdinov, likewise a secondary figure, but a Khrushchev supporter. There has been only one replacement, Frol R. Kozlov, who was formerly first Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers. Thus the Secretariat now consists of Khrushchev and his deputy Mukhittdinov, Suslov and the allied Kuusinen, and the fifth member Kozlov, who in fact becomes the major figure in the Secretariat after Khrushchev. Kozlov cannot be regarded as a Khrushchev man, but rather as a Party industrial manager. The result is a balance between the two wings and the emergence of a third force as arbiter, indicating a degree of compromise in the new set-up.

Recently the pivot of power has in fact been the plenary session of the Central Committee, which has grown in size and has taken the most important decisions. But the Secretariat played a decisive role in its selection, and through the Secretariat Khrushchev was able to select the membership of the entire Central Committee. Now Khrushchev has to some extent lost this advantage.

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In the person of Kozlov a third element has made its appearance in the Secretariat. The fact that all those removed from the Secretariat still hold their positions in the Presidium indicates that at present the Presidium is not an important pivot of power. In place of the dismissed Kirichenko, Nikolai I. Belyayev and Nikolai Bulganin, there have been appointed to the Presidium Aleksei N. Kosygin, Dimitri S. Polyansky, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR, and Nikolai V. Podgorny, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party. Of particular interest is the shift in the Council of Ministers. Khrushchev is its chairman, Kozlov and Anastas Mikoyan were first deputies. Kozlov was taken off state work, in which he was a specialist, and replaced by Kosygin, a specialist in light industry who had never worked in heavy industry. He, along with Mikoyan is now a first deputy of the Council of Ministers. All this points to an internal struggle which ended in the victory of neither group but rather a compromise, with an indication that some limit had been put on the growth of Khrushchev's influence. Evidently all three groups--orthodox Communists, Khrushchev's revisionists and the managerial group--had some word in the dispute. The managerial group probably has no program of its own, since it is more interested in internal affairs than in foreign policy, but in the USSR foreign policy is always a projection of internal policy.

What was discussed at this plenary session and what were the disagreements that led to the major changes at the top? In the Soviet Union the struggle for power is not simply a personal struggle. In any ideocratic state this struggle is linked with the struggle for a definite strategic and tactical program. In the Soviet Union, however, there is no conflict over strategy: all leaders are unanimously working for the establishment of Communism throughout the world. But they all may have different methods of promoting it, and thus there has always been a struggle over tactics, a matter of life and death to the Soviet regime.

It may be stated with assurance that China has a definite effect on internal events within the Soviet Union. Not long ago the European press published excerpts from a speech made in February by a Chinese observer at a meeting of representatives of the Warsaw Pact countries in Moscow. His speech--exceedingly significant--could be called an official statement of the Chinese attitude toward the policy of coexistence. According to Communist logic as interpreted by the Chinese, it has no ideological foundations. Imperialists will always be imperialists, and only their physical annihilation can provide peace and prosperity on earth. The Communist camp should not fear an atomic war. Capitalism cannot survive it and from such a war will be born a new Communist society. This is the gist of the speech, which was published in the leading Chinese newspaper Red Flag but did not appear in either the Soviet or satellite press.

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However, China, as yet neither an industrial nor an atomic power, is not as strong as to dictate such abrupt changes in Soviet foreign policy as those under discussion. We must look further and try to determine the attitudes of the three groups within the Soviet Communist Party toward the about-face in foreign policy.

Neither Khrushchev nor the supporters of his policy of coexistence can wish to increase tension to the extent of a major war. It may be taken for granted that even the Stalinists headed by Suslov have no desire for the total war envisaged by the Chinese leaders. They may desire increased tension and local conflicts, but so long as the West possesses nuclear weapons they will eschew total war under any circumstances. It is logical that the managerial group desires war even less. Finally, it is quite evident that the desire for peace is strong in the Soviet peoples, who have endured the horrors of war to a greater degree than any other. They cannot sympathize with either plans for war or an increase in tension in peacetime.

Khrushchev, then, came to the conference with a specific program, evolved undoubtedly by all groups on the basis of a compromise, indicating an uncompleted struggle for power. Khrushchev was simply the executor of this compromise plan.

The theory may quite reasonably be put forward that the Soviet leaders were forced to increase tension by the unexpected results of their policy of coexistence. On April 11 the Neue Zuericher Zeitung published an interesting article by a professor of psychology, Dr. Eugen Boehler, entitled "Mass Psychology and Tourist Diplomacy." Dr. Boehler asserts that in any war, hot or cold, the attitudes of the peoples on both sides are charged and the idea develops in the subconscious of the masses of the righteousness of their struggle. As a result certain complexes are created. Dr. Boehler holds the view that the announcement of the policy of coexistence broke down the barrier which separated the adversaries. Opportunities for contact with the popular masses appeared. With the "tourist" form of diplomacy, which arose from peaceful-coexistence policy, it was possible to build up a concept of the humanity of a recent enemy which will serve to exhaust the psychological charge in the masses. Such methods as embracing children, passing out bouquets, exchanging workers caps, etc., have been used by traveling Soviet diplomats. An enemy ceases to be what one's own propaganda paints him. On the basis of the laws of mass psychology, the search begins for a specific object of evil, the obstacle to a life of happiness. The blame will be attached not only to such entities as the West, manufacturers of armaments, capitalist monopolies but also to statesmen of the Soviet Union.

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This process operates on both sides, but Dr. Boehler takes the view that the West has no opportunity to control it. The East, on the other hand, is better able to do so, thanks to its totalitarian system. Thus Dr. Boehler evaluates the policy of coexistence and tourist diplomacy as being primarily of advantage to the Soviet Union. However, the process of relaxation resulting from the policy of coexistence may be as strong in the East as in the West. The first signs of greater aggressiveness in Soviet policy after Camp David were manifested in November of last year in Khrushchev's speeches during his visit to Hungary. It has only recently become known that in October there was a revolt in Temir Tau (Kazakhstan) among Komsomol members working on the construction of a new industrial plant. It would be dangerous to claim any close link between these two incidents but such coincidences often do have a definite interdependence. When Khrushchev returned from his trip to America, he stressed in all his speeches that all peoples and their governments wanted peace and that only a few weakening groups of warmongers were opposed to it. Naturally the Soviet people were bound to wonder why they must continue to arm and why they should strive so hard to overtake someone else when it was possible to live in peace. This relaxation was bound to affect the Soviet masses, probably to a greater extent than imagined in the West. A parallel may be found in the events of 1956, when Khrushchev's struggle against the Stalinists and the subsequent wave of revisionism unleashed the events in Poland and Hungary. Thereupon Khrushchev had to make use of tanks and artillery to suppress what he himself had brought about.

History provides many examples of conflicts which were decided not by material means but primarily by the appearance of a psychological factor. Both in hot wars and cold wars, the Soviet policy of coexistence being one form of the latter, the psychological factor is of exceptional importance. It is impossible to state with any certainty what the present morale and attitudes of the Soviet peoples are, but as a result of the policy of coexistence they undoubtedly have been disturbed. And it is possible that this disturbance provides the logical explanation why Soviet leaders, irrespective of their revisionist or orthodox tendencies, have been forced to switch from their policy of coexistence to an aggravation of tension within and outside of the Soviet Union.

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